

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OSLO 04191 300708Z
ACTION ABF-01

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 A-01 SIG-03 MMO-01 EUR-12
/034 W

-----014929 300718Z /16

R 291420Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6376

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AGAO, NO
SUBJECT: GAO VISITS

REF: STATE 207030

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFTTEL, I HAVE ASKED MY STAFF HERE TO ANALYZE THE INTERACTION WE HAVE HAD WITH THE GAO OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS. THIS TELEGRAM TRANSMITS OUR CONCLUSIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OUTLINE SUGGESTED BY REFTTEL.

2. FREQUENCY AND TRENDS OF GAO VISITS: OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WE HAVE HAD A TOTAL OF SIX GAO VISTS, ONE IN 1977 AND FIVE TO DATE THIS YEAR. WE KNOW OF AT LEAST TWO ADDITIONAL GAO VISITS PENDING FOR 1978. IT WOULD APPEAR THUS THAT WHILE THE FREQUENCY OF GAO VISITS HAS NOT TO DATE BEEN BURDENSOME, THE TREND IS CLEARLY UP. ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS, THE AVERAGE DURATION OF GAO TEAM VISITS TO NORWAY OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS HAS BEEN ABOUT TWO AND A HALF DAYS. THERE IS NO DISCERNIBLE TREND IN TERMS OF THE DURATION OF THE VISITS. ON AVERAGE THERE HAVE BEEN ABOUT THREE OR FOUR PEOPLE ON EACH OF THESE GAO TEAMS, WITH A SLIGHT RECENT TREND TO SMALLER TEAMS. AS FAR AS I CAN TELL FROM EXAMINING THE COMPOSITION OF THE TEAMS,
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THE GAO TENDS TO SEND THE PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT BACKGROUND.

3. WE HAVE OCCASIONALLY HAD ADVANCE QUESTIONNAIRES OR STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE OF VISIT SUBMITTED TO US BY THE GAO TEAMS. THIS CERTAINLY IS A VERY USEFUL WAY TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE GAO VISITS SINCE IT ALLOWS US TO TAILOR THE GAO'S SCHEDULE IN OSLO MORE DIRECTLY TO THE INTERESTS OF THE TEAM.

IT ALSO ENABLES US TO JUDGE BETTER THE LEVEL AT WHICH THE GAO SHOULD INTERACT WITH THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE BE GIVEN TIME TO COMMENT IN ADVANCE ON QUESTIONS AS WE HAVE FOUND IN SOME INSTANCES ROUTINE GROUND WAS COVERED SOMEWHAT TOO EXTENSIVELY AND THE QUESTIONS COULD HAVE BEEN CUT BACK TO HOLD THE INTEREST OF BUSY, HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS.

4. DEMANDS ON POST'S RESOURCES: IN GENERAL THE GAO VISITS HAVE MADE VERY MODEST DEMANDS ON THE POST. MOST OF THE TIME IS USED IN SCHEDULING THE GAO TEAM BEFORE THEY ARRIVE. THERE HAVE BEEN VERY LIMITED DEMANDS FOR SECRETARIAL AND TRANSPORTATION HELP. WE HAVE INCURRED NO OVERTIME PAY SUPPORTING ANY OF THE SIX VISITS. IN THE CASE OF ONE OF OUR VISITS, WE DID USE TWO DAYS OF AN OFFICER'S TIME TO ACCOMPANY THE GAO TEAM ON ITS CALLS ON THE GON. HOWEVER, THIS EXPENDITURE OF TIME WAS JUDGED TO BE USEFUL TO THE EMBASSY AS WELL.

5. REACTION OF HOST COUNTRY TO GAO VISITS: IT IS HARD TO MAKE A GENERAL STATEMENT ABOUT THE REACTION OF THE GON TO THE SIX VISITS WE HAVE HAD IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. IN SOME CASES (SUCH AS A RECENT STUDY ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND DRIVING) THE GAO TEAM WAS VERY WELL RECEIVED BY THE NORWEGIANS BECAUSE THE SUBJECT IS ONE ON WHICH THE NORWEGIANS HAVE DONE CONSIDERABLE WORK AND ON WHICH THEY PLACE HIGH PRIORITY. ON THE OTHER HAND, IN THE CASE OF ANOTHER GAO VISIT (LOOKING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INTO NORWEGIAN ENERGY POLICY) A SENIOR GON ENERGY OFFICIAL EXPRESSED SOME ANNOYANCE WITH THE LENGTH OF THE GAO'S QUESTIONNAIRE -- IT WAS 36 PAGES LONG -- AND THE FAIRLY PEDESTRIAN NATURE OF THE QUESTIONS.

6. I AM CONCERNED THAT IF THE TREND TOWARD MORE FREQUENT GAO VISITS CONTINUES, WE MAY SOON WEAR OUT OUR WELCOME WITH GON OFFICIALS. THE PROBLEM IS NOT THE DEMAND ON THE EMBASSY'S TIME -- FOR TO DATE THIS HAS BEEN INSIGNIFICANT HERE -- BUT THE POTENTIAL FOR MAKING INORDINATE DEMANDS ON BUSY NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. NORWAY IS A SMALL COUNTRY WITH A VERY RESTRICTED CIRCLE OF DECISION-MAKERS. AND WHILE THE NORWEGIANS ARE TOO COURTEOUS TO SAY NO TO A REQUEST FOR MEETINGS WITH GAO VISITORS, THERE IS A LIMIT TO WHAT WE CAN OR SHOULD IMPOSE ON THEM.

7. I HAVE, THEREFORE, INSTRUCTED MY STAFF TO EXAMINE VERY CAREFULLY EACH GAO REQUEST FOR A VISIT TO SEE IF THE EMBASSY CAN GATHER THE INFORMATION THE GAO WANTS WITHOUT NECESSITATING A VISIT TO OSLO BY A GAO TEAM OR AT LEAST FOCUS THE TEAM'S MEETINGS WITH THE APPROPRIATE GON OFFICIALS ON A SHORT LIST OF SPECIFIC POINTS NOT READILY ANSWERABLE BY OTHER MEANS. WE

ARE PARTICULARLY ATTRACTED BY THE IDEA OF HAVING THE GAO
SUBMIT THEIR QUESTIONS IN ADVANCE BY CABLE ON A REGULAR BASIS
TO AID US IN THIS ASSESSMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978OSLO04191
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780353-1069
Format: TEL
From: OSLO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780813/aaaaakpw.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ebdcf759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ABF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 78 STATE 207030
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1590872
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GAO VISITS
TAGS: AGAO, NO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ebdcf759-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014